

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 22, 2008

The Honorable John Spratt  
Chairman of the Committee on Budget  
207 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Ranking Member of the Committee on Budget  
B71 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Spratt and Ranking Member Ryan,

As members of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, we are writing to ask you to increase the budget for the Department of Veterans' Affairs Office of the Inspector General (OIG) beyond the President's request for Fiscal Year 2009.

In FY2008, Congress provided the Office of the Inspector General with \$80.5 million in funding which enabled the OIG to hire 48 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees and expand its oversight capabilities. For FY2009, the President has requested \$75.6 million for the OIG. This decrease will require the OIG to eliminate the 48 newly hired FTE employees and cancel the oversight projects assigned to those employees.

The VA Office of the Inspector General is an invaluable resource that forces VA to spend wisely and eliminate waste. VA itself acknowledges that the OIG provides a return of \$11 for every \$1 invested. In light of the historic increases Congress made to the VA's budget in 2007, it is crucial that the OIG has enough funding to effectively monitor how VA uses its resources. The OIG has proven its ability to serve as a watchdog of the taxpayers' money.

Furthermore, the VA OIG has the ability to save lives. This committee held a hearing in January which examined patient deaths at the Marion, Illinois VA clinic. The OIG testified that with more funding, it could more effectively evaluate the quality of care at VA medical facilities across the United States. While we cannot claim that increased OIG funding would prevent all accidental patient deaths in the VA system, we can be sure that more funding for the OIG would improve care at VA, which benefits all veterans.


We believe strongly that the VA Office of the Inspector General must receive more funding than the President's budget provides. America's veterans have served this country with honor and distinction and we owe them nothing less than the highest quality of care and benefits. The OIG will be a vital partner as Congress and the VA try to meet that standard.

Sincerely,


  
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Tim J. Walz  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

  
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Ginny Brown-Waite  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

  
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Harry E. Mitchell  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

  
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Brian P. Bilbray  
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Ciro D. Rodriguez  
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Zachary T. Space  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS